(c) and (d) It was decided to merge the National AIDS Control Board and the Technical Advisory Committee under a common management committee.

Visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius

*515. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL:
SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA:

With the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister of Mauritius visited India recently;

(b) if so, the various issues that were discussed and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether any agreements were reached between the two countries dunng the visit;

(d) if so, the salient features thereof;

(e) whether the visiting Prime Minister had offered to permit Indian businessmen to have trade links with Mauritius businessmen, and also have joint ventures with that country; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The discussions, which included a comprehensive review of bilateral relations between India and Mauritius, and issues of regional and international interest, were characterised by close understanding and an identity of views. The Pnme Minister of Mauritius expressed his understanding of India's concerns on the proposed comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He also reiterated his Government's support for India becoming a permanent member of a restructured UN Security Council. No formal agreements were signed during the visit. Keeping in view the privileged relationship between the two countries. Government has agreed to the request of the Government of Mauritius for an additional flight of Air Mauritius between Mauritius and Delhi on the same terms and conditions as the current flights operating between Mauritius and Bombay.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. The Prime Minister of Mauritius called for increased Indian investment and cooperation in the technological upgradation of the sugar and textiles industries of Mauritius and the development of the tourism sector. He also invited Indian industrial enterprises to participate on a Build-Operate-Transfer basis in infrastructure development projects in Mauritius.

Influx of Refugees from Sri Lanka

*516 SHRI B.L. SHARMA PREM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the heavy thrust, by the Lankan forces against the Tamil Militants, have resulted in large scale influx of refugees from Sri Lanka to India during the recent months;

(b) if so, the estimated number of the migrants since Jan. 1, 1996 and till date:

(c) whether diplomatic pressures are being exerted on the Government of Sri Lanka for controlling the situation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and its outcome and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The Government have received reports of some persons affected by the situation in Sri Lanka having come to India during the last month. According to reports received, the groups of people who came to India in August 1996 are mainly from Pesalai and Mannar areas who were affected by food shortages, and other causes including fear of possible clashes between LTTE and security forces in these areas. The recent thrust by Sri Lankan security forces has been in the Kilinochchi region which is quite distant from Mannar/Pesalai.

(b) As per information received from the State Government of Tamilnadu, since 1.1.96 a total of 988 Sri Lankan refugees have come so far to India.

(c) and (d) Government have conveyed their concern at this development to the Sri Lankan authorities, who have assured that measures have been taken to control the situation. These include steps to ensure adequate food supplies and relief activities and presence of international relief agencies in the area.

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

*517. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present Government had promised to strengthen the relations with all the neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, the steps that have been taken in this regard;

(c) whether the Prime Ministers of these countries had shown keen interest in improving the relations with India;

(d) if so, whether the Government had started fresh talks with all the countries; and

(e) if so, the details and the outcome thereof, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (e) The present Government have given top priority to strengthening relations with all the